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NEWS



## New Notre Dame Law Program Helps Diverse Students Network With Big Law Employers



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Legal Education



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Beginning in the 2022 fall semester, Notre Dame Law School debuted a new series of events called "Including YOU!" aimed at creating networking opportunities for law students from communities underrepresented in the legal profession.

The semester was filled with a variety of social events such as business dinners, cocktail receptions and breakfasts to connect students and employers. Each event was sponsored by a different legal employer, including Johnson & Johnson, Jackson Walker, Bricker & Eckler, Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath, Dinsmore & Shohl, Waller Law, Reed Smith, Benesch, Polsinelli, Locke Lord and Ropes & Gray, among others, according to the school's announcement.

"The networking opportunities were a way to strengthen our shared DEI [diversity, equity and inclusion] goals with our law firm partners, and promote efforts to increase diversity among top law firms by directly connecting firms with top-tier candidates from communities underrepresented in the legal profession," Max Gaston, Notre Dame Law's director of DEI, said in a statement.

The events involved networking with students from the law school's many affinity student organizations, which included the Black Law Students Association, Hispanic Law Student Association, Asian Pacific American Law Students Association, First Generation Professionals, LGBT Law Forum, Women's Legal Forum, Native American Law Students Association, Middle Eastern Law Students Association and the Military and Veteran Law Society, according to the announcement.

Ropes & Gray kicked off the Including YOU series in August with a business dinner, which was organized by the law school's Career Development Office, during Welcome Week for incoming first-year law students, and Bricker & Eckler featured an affinity group student lunch organized with the Black Law Students Association in September, according to the school.

"It was an important opportunity for us to connect with students and share our DEI efforts to drive increasing representation in the legal industry amongst midsize firms and with a stellar university that is not in our backyard," Rhonda Talford Knight, chief DEI officer at Bricker & Eckler, said in a statement.

The largest event in the series was the Meet the Employers Diversity Fellowship networking event in October with 37 law firms from across the country participating and discussing their diversity initiatives and fellowships.

The firms participating in the Meet the Employers Diversity Fellowship event included: Barnes & Thornburg, Bricker & Eckler, Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner, Chapman & Cutler, Dentons, DLA Piper, Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath, Foley & Lardner, Frost Brown Todd, Goodwin Procter, Haynes and Boone, Husch Blackwell, Ice Miller, Jackson Walker, Jenner & Block, Jones Day, Kelley Drye & Warren, Kirkland & Ellis, Latham & Watkins, Locke Lord, McDermott Will & Emery, McGuireWoods, Miller Johnson, Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe, Paul Hastings, Perkins Coie, Polsinelli, Quarles & Brady, Reed Smith, Richards, Layton & Finger, Ropes & Gray, Shook, Hardy & Bacon, Sidley Austin, Snell & Wilmer, Taft Law, Warner Norcross + Judd, and White & Case, according to the [school's website](#).

"We connected with current students to discuss the importance of diversity and our shared goal of creating a more inclusive environment for all attorneys," Caroline Capili, a 2022 law school graduate who is now an associate with Jackson Walker, said in a statement. "As a recent graduate of the law school, it has been a joy to watch the impactful programming we have to prepare our students better to become 'a different kind of lawyer.'"

At another event, Kevin Cokley, a psychologist at the University of Michigan, gave a presentation on his research on the impostor phenomenon and the impact of impostor feelings on attorneys and students of color in higher education, for which a [podcast](#) was created.

"I found that the low-key mingling atmosphere helped relax things," 1L Aisha Bah said in a statement. "The people at the firms were super forthcoming, and I could tell they wanted to give us genuine insight into the practical considerations we should have in mind as we embark on our professional journeys.

"The most valuable part is that I've kept several of the connections I made. It was a great opportunity to find out if you mesh with a firm and get your foot in the door if you can see yourself there in the future," Bah added.

Another 1L also found the series valuable.

"It was great to network and meet with prospective employers and I am thankful Notre Dame facilitated this opportunity for students," Dekan Ekpo said in a statement. "As we prepare to launch our careers, it was helpful and a phenomenal experience."

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